



SCHOOL PROGRAM

ATHLETE STORIES

Alexandre Bilodeau —
Inclusion // Grade 6+

About Alexandre

BORN September 8, 1987

BIRTHPLACE Montréal, Quebec

SPORT Freestyle Skiing

OLYMPIC GAMES Sochi 2014,
Vancouver 2010, Turin 2006

ROLE MODEL My brother Frederic
because he never gives up

FAVOURITE ANIMAL Kangaroo

FAVOURITE COLOUR Gold, ha-ha!

No, probably red



Alexandre Bilodeau — Inclusion

Alex Bilodeau takes a deep breath and stares down the steep incline of the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games' freestyle ski run on Cypress Mountain. The entire hillside is covered with bumps of snow, moguls. In just a few seconds Alex will launch his body down this course, hoping to win the gold medal.

"I could feel the pressure. No Canadian athlete had ever won a gold medal at an Olympic Games in Canada before, but the biggest pressure was from myself. I wanted to win, and I knew I could."

The huge crowd begins to chant, "Canada! Canada!" The sound rolls up the snowy hillside to Alex like thunder. He knows one of the loudest voices in that crowd is his older brother, Frederic. Alex calls him his hero, the man who has helped him get to the top of this Olympic mountain.

"He is always at my races cheering me on. Frederic has Cerebral Palsy [a motor condition that causes physical disability in the various areas of body movement]. He has lived all his life with that and that gives me some perspective on whatever I'm going through at the start of a race. His example keeps me grounded and forces me to concentrate on what I need to do to win."

The starter yells, "Go!" and Alex flies down the mountain. His knees flash as he deftly handles each mound of snow. He digs his poles into the powdered mountainside to help him keep his balance.

"Life is like a moguls run. It goes really fast and you have to deal with all sorts of bumps and obstacles. You have to work hard and, also stay calm to beat them."

Like any elite athlete, Alex has had to overcome injuries. He's had disappointing results, bad scores from judges and plain bad days as a competitor. Through it all, his brother pushed him to work harder, keep trying, and to never give up.

"Doctors told Frederic that he wouldn't walk after he turned ten. He's now in his late twenties and still walks. He never gives up, even when obstacles get in his way so why would I? He never complains so why should I? He's taught me what it means to be tough and I wouldn't have this gold medal without him."

Alex hits the jumps, his body moving at incredible speed. A mistake here could cost him significant points. He's going too fast to consider this, acting now on memory and instinct and years of preparation.

"The Olympics are a mental game. My brother is as quick mentally as anyone else and living with him has made me mentally quick as well. He always gives me advice and feedback."

Alex lands without missing a beat, his hips moving slightly to his internal tempo, his knees locked together as he approaches the finish line. Alex is a natural. But, incredibly, moguls wasn't his first choice of sport. He wanted to focus on downhill skiing, but when they were kids Frederic wanted to try freestyle skiing instead. He started freestyle skiing for Frederic.

"It's funny because people see me, as an athlete, as a kind of "normal" person. Frederic can't move as well but he is just as much of a competitor in life. I always try harder and never quit thanks to his example."

Alex crosses the finish line with a great time and the judges give him high scores, but he has to wait for one final competitor to come down the hill to be sure he's won the gold medal.

"I watched him and knew he had made some mistakes. I looked over at the crowd and Frederic was giving me the thumbs up. He knew."

The judges quickly confirm the Bilodeau's thoughts and the final scoreboard flashes

"#1. Alexandre Bilodeau".

Now that the results are final Alex can let all his emotions pour out. He rushes over to the crowd and searches out his brother. He gives Frederic a huge bear hug, and Frederic hugs him back just as hard. Alexandre has made history and Frederic has one final message for his little brother, the Olympic champion.

"He only said three words to me, 'I love you.' That meant everything. When I got my gold medal, I knew I had to dedicate that victory to one person, my hero, my brother Frederic."



